

# State Custody

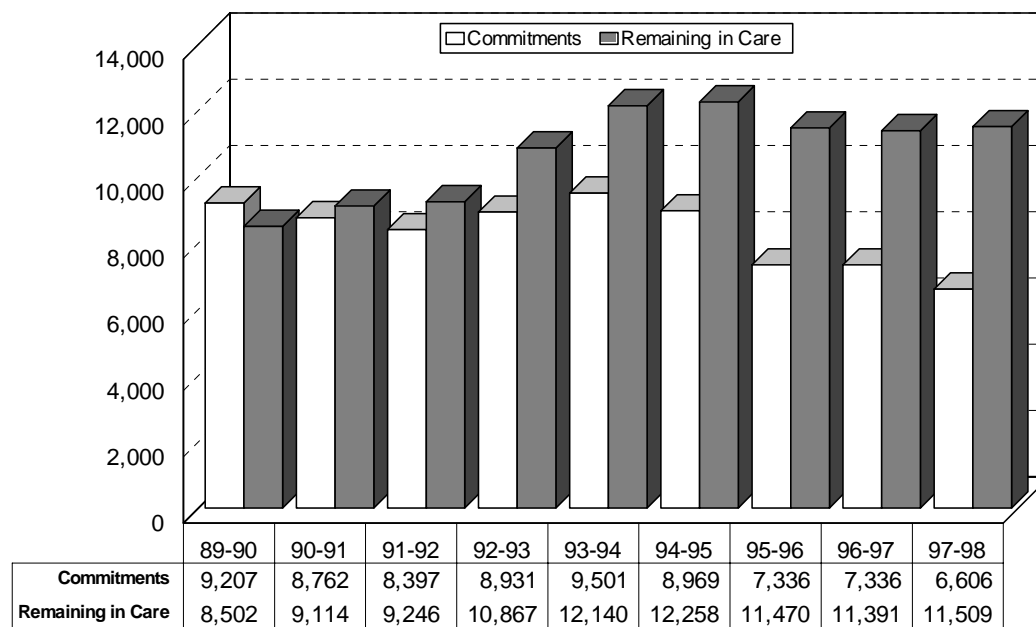
In the last few years, the state custody system has experienced many changes and challenges.

Prior to 1996, four state departments in Tennessee provided custodial services for children: Education (DOE), Human Services (DHS), Mental Health and Mental Retardation (DMHMR), and Youth Development (DYD).

In July 1996, services for children in custody of the four departments were consolidated into a single entity, the Department of Children's Services (DCS). The challenges for the new department included designing a new service model to provide children and families appropriate and adequate services with consistency and continuity, reducing the number of children in state custody, and providing timely and cost-effective services.

Children are brought before the juvenile court as the result of the filing of a petition. Petitions are filed by members of the community (parents, law enforcement, schools, and victims), or stakeholders involved with children's services (protective services, probation officers) related to the abuse, neglect, or behavior problem of the child. Children can have multiple petitions before entering custody. A child enters state custody when a juvenile court judge or referee issues an order that gives legal custody of the child to the state.

**Children Committed to and Remaining in State Custody  
FY 1989-90 through FY 1997-98**



Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Children's Services